

Inspection of The Children's Garden

The Walled Garden, Colney Hall, Watton Road, Norwich NR4 7TY

Inspection date: 6 August 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy and engaged, clearly enjoying their time at the setting. Staff build trusting relationships with each child and take time to understand their individual needs. They work closely with parents to settle children, develop their confidence and help them to communicate their wants and needs. Staff use strategies, such as displaying photos of family members, to help children to feel safe and secure. They follow babies' home routines closely to ensure consistency. Babies form warm and positive relationships with the nurturing staff.

Children are confident as they make choices in their play, freely exploring their environment and resources. They show excitement and curiosity in their discoveries, for example when they find a worm. The spacious site offers extensive opportunities for physical development, and staff provide effective support to help children develop independence. Staff give consistent guidance so that children learn safe boundaries and understand rules and expectations. They monitor children's play, offer timely and sensitive support, and introduce new skills, such as teaching young children how to swing on a tyre rope.

Children behave well. Staff are good role models and clearly remind children of expectations. They encourage children to share, take turns and understand how their behaviour affects others. Staff regularly praise and reward good behaviour, fostering a respectful atmosphere.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The provider has a clear vision of what they would like children to achieve during their time at the setting. Leaders and staff work effectively to deliver a broad, balanced and well-planned curriculum with a strong focus on children learning through the natural environment.
- Children are curious, eager to learn and benefit from skilful support that develops their understanding of safety during risky play. In forest school, staff teach children how to forage safely and identify potentially poisonous plants. Children recall previous experiences, such as making jam and elderflower cordial, and confidently share ideas, such as making a crumble with the collected blackberries.
- The provider, leaders and staff regularly review and adapt the environment to meet children's needs. As a result, the learning environment is constantly evolving. For example, a large toilet area in the new indoor cabin reduces anxiety for those learning to use the toilet. Leaders have further development plans in place.
- Staff manage children's personal care routines sensitively, maintaining children's privacy and dignity. They tell babies they are going to change their nappy before

picking them up, adopting a respectful approach that helps babies feel safe and valued.

- Children of all ages enjoy songs and develop a love of books, which supports their language development, imagination and early literacy skills. Babies make choices as they point to the book they want staff to read. Older children independently select books and confidently turn the pages as they explore them. Staff share books spontaneously with children throughout the day, such as on arrival to help children to settle. These shared moments strengthen relationships between children and staff and enhance children's listening and attention skills.
- Parents value the unique outdoor learning environment, daily face-to-face updates and regular online communication. Staff work in partnership with parents, offering advice and guidance to support developmental milestones. They encourage parents to share what their children have been doing at home.
- Children who speak English as an additional language receive targeted support. Staff work with parents to learn key words and phrases to help children feel understood and included. They also undertake additional training to extend their knowledge and strengthen the support they provide.
- Leaders recognise the importance of closely monitoring staff practice and provide training and guidance to support them. Staff say that they feel well supported and have regular opportunities for professional development, which builds their knowledge and skills. However, monitoring of staff practice is not always rigorous enough to ensure all children consistently benefit from rich learning experiences.
- Children develop social skills and friendships, often inviting their peers into their imaginative play. Mealtimes are social occasions, with staff praising children for serving themselves. Children enjoy a varied menu of freshly prepared meals. This is carefully planned to take account of children's individual dietary needs, preferences and any allergies they may have.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- continue to support staff practice to ensure that all children consistently benefit from rich learning opportunities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY549988
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10410241
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 9
Total number of places	172
Number of children on roll	252
Name of registered person	The Children's Garden Day Nursery Partnership
Registered person unique reference number	RP532409
Telephone number	01603 813011
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

The Children's Garden registered in 2017 and operates from premises in the grounds of Colney Hall in Norwich, Norfolk. The nursery follows a Montessori approach to learning and mainly operates in an outdoor environment. It employs 31 members of childcare staff, 20 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including seven staff who are qualified to degree level or beyond. In addition, some staff are Montessori trained or have completed forest school training. The nursery is open from Monday to Friday, all year round, except for bank holidays. Sessions are from 7.45am until 6.15pm. The setting offers government-funded places for all eligible children.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Karen Harris
Nina Hopson

Inspection activities

- The inspectors conducted a tour of the provision, including the forest school areas, and discussed the safety and suitability of the environment.
- The manager and inspectors completed a learning walk together of all areas that children access and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspectors observed the quality of education being provided and assessed the impact that this has on children's learning.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspectors during discussions and through written feedback, and the inspectors took account of these views.
- The manager and an inspector carried out joint observations together.
- Children spoke to the inspectors during the inspection.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager and group manager held a meeting with the inspectors and provided a sample of key documentation on request, including evidence of suitability checks.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

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